

# REACH to FOREST

## Cultural Exchange Program



### Vaga Lume

Vaga Lume is a Brazilian youth and literacy-based organisation that takes action for the promotion of education and culture in nine rural communities in the Brazilian Legal Amazon region, which encompasses nine states. The area occupies sixty percent of the Brazilian territory, has twenty eight million people (thirteen percent of the Brazilian population) and contains more than thirty percent of the planet's biodiversity.

They are called Vaga Lume (firefly) because there are several of these little insects living in the rural communities where the community libraries are located.

Their mission is to empower children living in rural remote communities of the Amazon by promoting reading and the management of community libraries as knowledge sharing spaces and to create opportunities for cultural exchange through reading, writing and verbal communication.

### The Atodi Tribe

The Atodi village is located on the right bank of the Arapiuns River, belonging to the municipality of Santarém, in Pará state, Brazil.

Atodi was founded on January 14th, 1943 by seven families.



In May 2021, the families recognised themselves as an indigenous village.

Its population is one hundred and seventy three people, including children, youth and adults, totaling forty seven families. Eighty nine percent of the village declare themselves indigenous. Its economy revolves around cassava production, fishing, community-based tourism and handicrafts.



### Introducing St Philips

St Philips were chosen to represent the United Kingdom in the cultural exchange program. The program aimed to foster mutual understanding, respect, and appreciation of different cultures and lifestyles. Class 4ES made initial contact with the Atodi tribe in early October 2023. During the introductory phase of the project, 4ES created resources in which we could share images, videos

and information all about our daily lives, school and the local environment.

*Even though we are different in many ways, we are so similar!*

Olivia Sk



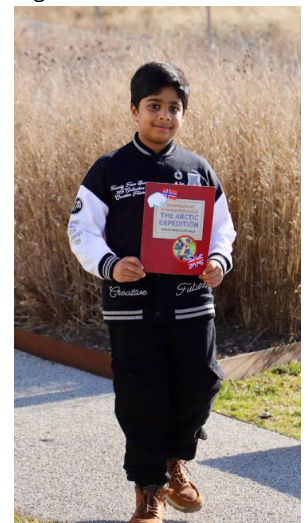
### Washington DC

A large part of the Cultural Exchange Program was to share our findings with other children from across the globe. A class representative was chosen from each participating school.



In 4ES, Aneeshwar Kunchala was selected to travel to Washington DC to present our class project to other students and young adults at the Kennedy Center during the 'REACH to FOREST' festival. In January 2024, Aneeshwar was appointed as The Kennedy Center's first Youth Ambassador.

As a final farewell, the children exchanged class gifts. In 4ES, we decided to share our love of reading, and purchased a copy of a Roald Dahl classic in Portuguese. The Atodi tribe were thrilled with our gift, and in return delivered handcrafted baskets and oars from their village.







Learning about the Atodi tribe has helped me to realise that some people have different opportunities to me.

Arya N



This experience really makes me think differently about my choices.

Spencer



Their lives aren't easy. I didn't know that our choices could affect someone so far away.

Oliwia L



## How did the work received expand our knowledge of diversity?

Our favourite part of the project was reflecting on the question 'How did the work received expand our knowledge of diversity?'. This was a fantastic opportunity to truly embrace the idea of walking a mile in someone else's shoes and reflect upon the greater implications of our own choices and how they can impact others.

The Atodi tribe relies on the river for their food supply, transport and their economy. However, due to global warming, their river can often run dry. This has inspired us to think more carefully about our carbon footprint. During March 2024, Year 4 will be writing a letter to our local MP and King Charles to talk about carbon emissions and how we can make a difference in Warrington.

### I Never Knew - Class 4ES

**I never knew,**  
English was new to you,  
That you spoke Nheegatu,  
**But now I do,**  
**Thank you.**

**I never knew,**  
That you could get to school on a canoe,  
How much your culture means to you,  
**But now I do,**  
**Thank you.**

**I didn't know,**  
That your lives depend on what you grow,  
And global warming changes how your rivers flow,  
**But now I do,**  
**Thank you.**

**I had no idea,**  
Books brought you great cheer,  
That the jaracara brought you no fear,  
**But now I do,**  
**Thank you.**

**I couldn't have guessed,**  
You were so far to the west,  
And that we would be so similarly dressed,  
**But now I can,**  
**Thank you.**

**I had no knowledge,**  
That you live in the Atodi village,  
And that you have an ancient language,  
**But now I do,**  
**Thank you.**

**I was not aware,**  
About how the weather is changing over there,  
And all of the things we share,  
**But now I am,**  
**Thank you.**

**I was unknowing,**  
That we got global warming going,  
And how it prevents your river from flowing,  
**But now I know,**  
**Thank you.**

**I was unknowing,**  
That you get to school by rowing,  
And about all the cassava flour you are growing,  
**But now I know,**  
**Thank you.**

**I had no understanding,**  
Global warming was expanding,  
But change we are demanding,  
**But now I do,**  
**Thank you.**

**I had no information,**  
That the river was your foundation,  
And our actions are causing such frustration,  
**But now I do,**  
**Thank you.**

## Impact

This project has empowered us to take a more active role to protect our planet. We have thought a lot about responsibility, advocacy and compassion.

### Responsibility

It is our shared responsibility to protect our planet and ensure it remains the beautiful place God created for years to come.

*"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters."*

Our choices can have a big impact on communities around the world who rely on us to make eco-friendly decisions.

### Advocacy

We have learnt that it is important to speak out and advocate for communities like the Atodi tribe, whose livelihoods are endangered partly due to the lack of public knowledge.

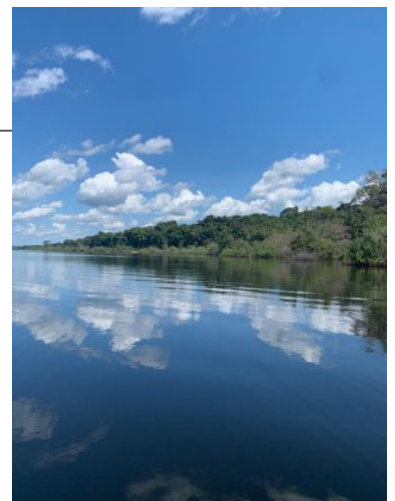
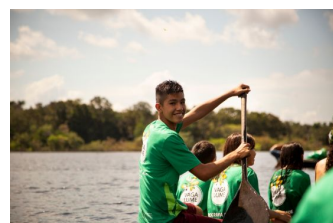
*"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute."*

We need to spread the word and inform others, educating our neighbours about the impact of our actions on the indigenous world.

### Compassion

As a school built on our faith, we need to remember our Christian value of compassion ensuring that we care for all communities no matter their size or location.

*"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."*



**"The river is our life."**